

The Department of Human Resources was created by the Nevada State Legislature in 1963 by NRS 232.290. In that legislative session, Chapter 393 of the Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS, related to the Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources) was amended by the Legislature to add sections creating the Department of Health and Welfare, incorporating into NRS 232, the formerly separate functions of:

- Nevada State Children's Home
- State Department of Health and Welfare
- Nevada State Hospital
- State Alcoholism Agency
- State Welfare Department
- Nevada Youth Training Center
- Nevada Girls Training Center

The NRS was subsequently amended in 1965, 1967, 1969, 1971, 1973, 1979, 1985, 1991, 1993, and 1997. In 1999 NRS 232.300 was again amended to create the Department of Human Resources. The Department is under the direction of a director appointed by, responsible to, and serving at the pleasure of the Governor. The Department currently consists of the following divisions:

- Aging Services
- Child and Family Services
- Disability Services
- Health
- Health Care Financing and Policy
- Mental Health and Developmental Services
- Public Defender
- Welfare

The mission of the Department is to: "...promote the health and well-being of Nevadans through the delivery or facilitation of essential services to ensure families are strengthened, public health is protected and individuals achieve their highest level of self-sufficiency" (DHR website, May, 2005).

The Director of Human Resources appoints, with the consent of the Governor, administrators of the division. The Director, with the advice from agencies of local governments and nonprofit organizations which provide social services, adopts a master plan for the provision of human services in the State that:

- Identifies and assesses the plans and programs of the Department
- Sets forth priorities for provision of those services
- Provides for communication and coordination of those services among nonprofit organizations, agencies of local government, the State and the Federal Government
- Identifies sources of funding for those services
- Provides information to assist the Department in providing those services and in planning and budgeting
- Contains information necessary for the Department to communicate effectively with the Federal Government concerning demographic trends, formulas for distribution of federal money, and any need for modification of programs
- May require nonprofit organizations and state and local governmental agencies to provide information to the Director regarding the programs of those organizations.